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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
Agenda item 12*

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre Karbuczky (Hungary)

Addendum

VII. REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995: CONFERENCE SERVICES

Introduction and overview

1. At its 327th meeting, on 12 June 1991, the Committee on Conferences decided to review the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budgets for conference and library services, and to provide its views thereon to the General Assembly.

2. At its 360th and 361st meetings, on 2 and 3 November 1993, the Committee reviewed the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995: conference services (A/48/6 (Sect. 25E)).

Discussion

3. Clarification was sought, and received, from the Secretariat regarding various aspects of the proposed programme budget, including the late submission of the budget fascicle.

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

4. Particular attention was given to the projected workload for 1994-1995 which, in the light of experience through September 1993, might prove to be greater than anticipated at the time the budget proposals were prepared and might therefore exceed the planned capacity of the Office of Conference Services. It was proposed that, since the increase was largely due to increased peace-keeping activity on the part of the Security Council, the possibility should be explored of providing additional resources for conference-servicing, inter alia, through redeployment of resources, including extrabudgetary resources of the support account for peace-keeping operations. Reservations to that proposal were expressed on the grounds that conference services should be funded entirely from the regular budget.

5. It was noted that routine requests for temporary posts had been made to eliminate backlog in the United Nations Treaty Series and that the conversion of those posts to permanent posts might be a more cost-effective approach.

6. Clarification was sought and received on the continued application of economy measures in Geneva and Vienna, which was a cause for concern, particularly with regard to Geneva where they affected the provision of conference services to bodies serviced by the Centre for Human Rights. In response to a query regarding progress towards the establishment of unified conference services at Vienna to be administered by the United Nations, the representative of the Secretariat stated that negotiations with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) were proceeding following a meeting between the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and the Director-General of UNIDO.

7. The view was expressed that, as conference services were reflected in other budget fascicles, the Committee should expand its review of the proposed programme budget to include conference services at Nairobi and at the regional commissions.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee, regretting that the issuance of the budget fascicle on Conference Services had been delayed, recalled its responsibility to advise the General Assembly on the current and future requirements of the Organization for conference services, facilities and documentation, and that the provision to the United Nations of appropriate, timely, high-quality conference services, in the most cost-effective manner possible, with due respect for the equal treatment of all official languages, was an essential element in the efficient functioning of the Organization.

9. In order to achieve the required level of services, enhanced coordination and technological innovation were indispensable, but equally essential was the provision of adequate human and material resources. In that connection, the Committee took note of the restoration of the post of Assistant Secretary-General and the upgradings proposed.

10. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that the conversion of temporary posts to permanent posts should be considered whenever such a conversion was deemed to be more cost-effective.

11. In the light of the foregoing, the Committee also recommended that the six temporary posts routinely requested for the purpose of eliminating the backlog in the United Nations Treaty Series should be converted to permanent posts.

12. The Committee expressed concern at the continued application of economy measures, particularly in Geneva, where they affected the provision of conference services to bodies serviced by the Centre for Human Rights.

13. The Committee suggested that the Secretariat should study the possibility of transferring to the Office of Conference Services the staff specialized in the drafting of press releases, so that they could prepare summary records, as well.

14. It also took note of the fact that negotiations with UNIDO were proceeding following a meeting between the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and the Director-General of UNIDO, and reiterated its request that negotiations be concluded as quickly as possible. The Committee emphasized that, in pursuing further negotiations with UNIDO, the Secretariat should proceed from the premise that the primary concern of Member States was to ensure that their combined financial burden for providing conference services to the United Nations Office at Vienna and UNIDO should in the long run benefit from the unification agreement.

15. The Committee decided that in future its review of the proposed programme budget for conference services should be expanded to include conference services at Nairobi and at the regional commissions.